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THE PROBLEMS OF BOYHOOD

A COURSE OF ETHICS FOR BOYS IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

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Study XIII. Courtesy and Respect

Social custom prescribes certain forms of courtesy in our dealings with each other, conformity with which is supposed to mark the well-bred person. Many of these have their source in the remote past and we perform them without thought of their origin or significance. These forms sometimes have been found to interfere with other more important things and have been set aside. On one occasion when Jesus sent his disciples to visit the cities to which he intended to go, he directed them to "salute no man by the way" (Luke 10:4). He did not intend this to teach them to be discourteous. The form of salutation in the Orient was so elaborate that the time required for it would have prevented them from carrying out the purpose of their journey. For a long time the Chinese would not allow the building of railroads because of respect for their ancestors, over whose graves it would have been necessary for the roads to pass. The outward forms of courtesy are constantly changing. This is not to be regretted so long as the spirit which prompts them remains. Can you give any illustration of such change?

Courtesy has as its basis respect for the worth of another person or of one's self. The Chinese philosopher Confucius, whose teachings contain many

valuable precepts regarding courtesy, said, "A man must first respect himself, then others will respect him." You may be sorry for a drunken man, but you do not respect him. A vulgar or profane person has not our respect. Why is this?

Custom has defined certain forms of courtesy in the conduct of men toward women. These reached their height in the courts of kings at the times of which Scott's novels give us a picture. Cite some illustrations. Are men less courteous now? Why does a man lift his hat when meeting a lady? Does a gentleman give his seat to a lady in a crowded car? Does it make any difference whether she is an acquaintance? Discuss the rule of the sea—"women first"—in case of the sinking of the "Titanic." Is the granting of the suffrage to women likely to make any difference in these forms of courtesy toward women? If so, why should it?

In all times children have been regarded as under obligation to show respect to their parents. What is the ground for this? We often hear it said that the youth of today are less respectful toward their parents than in former times. If this is true, to what may it be due? "Children should be seen and not heard" was a familiar saying when

your father was a boy, which is seldom heard now. What is the effect of the present lack of formal restraint in the home upon the attitude of children toward their parents? Is a boy likely to respect his father less if their relations toward each other become those of chums? In many families today the boys have opportunities for better education than their parents had. Should this lessen the respect which a boy has for his father?

Does the position which a teacher holds entitle him to the respect of his pupil? In school, corporal punishment has been given up. What effect do you think this has had in the respect which boys feel for and show their teachers? What qualities in a teacher increase your

respect for him? What qualities detract from it?

There is in this country much disrespect for law. Give some illustrations of this. What seems to be the cause? What bad results follow disregard for law? What remedies can you suggest?

Topics for further discussion: The effect of uniforms and costumes as an aid to respect; e.g., those worn by foreign diplomats as contrasted with the black frock coat of one of our foreign representatives; the difference in the attitude of all Englishmen toward their king, and that of all Americans toward the President; the change in the method of dress of clergymen and its effect upon the attitude of people toward them.

Study XIV. Self-Control

One who lives near a harbor is accustomed to see three kinds of craft. The scow has no power of self-propulsion or self-direction. It is useful for carrying cargoes but only within short distances and when towed by a tug. The sailboat makes its way without a tug, but its power is not within itself. Only when the wind blows can it move at all and its progress then depends upon the force and direction of the wind. The steamer has within itself the power which drives it over the seas in any direction in spite of opposing winds and waves. Three kinds of people may be compared with these different craft. Describe each. Does the class in which a man falls depend upon his occupation or social position? Our lives are made up of a succession of choices. On a given morning a boy may go to school or "play hooky"; when asked by his

teacher whether he has committed a certain misdemeanor, he may lie or tell the truth. In the ordinary routine, most of our conduct is the result of habit or custom, but in any given situation we may, if we choose, decide to act contrary to these. Does the knowledge that the effects of alcohol are injurious prevent a man from becoming a drunkard? Knowledge is valuable so far as conduct is concerned only as it forms a guide for reasonable choice. The value of the studies of various habits which we have made will depend upon the choice which we make when we are confronted with an opportunity to do a right or wrong act.

The very center of a man, that which determines his strength and power, is his will. The power to exercise his will, to control his conduct, we call self-control. Nothing is so essential to

success as this. A strong body and good health are not so essential. Much of the important work of the world has been done to an accompaniment of pain. How does Robert Louis Stevenson's life illustrate this? Boys are often ready with petty excuses for their failures. Such boys are thus paving the way to failure in life. There is no place on the football team for the boy who shows a "yellow streak." Neither is there anywhere else. Environment or circumstances are often held responsible for a man's failure or success. To what extent is failure or success rightly attributable to environment or circumstances? History is full of successful men who have surmounted unfavorable circumstances. Give some illustrations. Luck is often assigned as a reason for success. Do you know of any great success which can be attributed to this?

The heights by great men reached and
kept

Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.

The habit of self-control, like any specific habit, may be acquired. Refer to the maxims on habit given in Study IV and apply them here. What is the value of athletics in forming the habit of self-control? What game seems best suited for this? Discuss the reasons. The control of one's temper, of a tend-

ency to be lazy, or of any bad habit to which one knows he is addicted, furnishes an excellent opportunity for practice.

The power of self-control is only gradually acquired in youth. It is worth while to stop and think whether you are gaining it. Are there some things which you once found it hard to do that you now do without thinking? Are there some things which you knew to be wrong which you once did which you feel no desire to do now? If so, you are making progress; if not, take yourself strongly in hand, before the lack of self-control becomes habitual. Only thus can you hope to live a self-controlled and successful life.

Self-control comes only as a result of practice. Discuss the value of the two types of discipline found in military schools and in schools giving pupils more freedom of action. What is the value of each type of discipline? What do you think of student "self-government"? In *Tom Brown's School Days* the older boys at Rugby exercised control over the younger. What do you think of "fagging" as practiced there? Would it not be well in every school to develop in the older pupils a sense of responsibility, not only for their own conduct, but also for that of the younger pupils? Suggest some specific ways in which this might be done in your school.

Study XV. Conservation and Efficiency

The words selected as a heading for this study are among those most often found in the newspapers and magazines of the day. The term "conservation" is generally used in connection with the economical use of such natural resources

as timber, coal, or soil; the term "efficiency" is generally applied to industry or business and involves the question of securing the largest return with the least expenditure of time, labor, or material. The need of conservation of

the great forests which once covered the land, of the immense bodies of coal and iron under our feet, of the rich soil which covered the prairies of the Middle West, has been realized only when, through our carelessness or extravagance, we are face to face with the danger of their complete exhaustion. Older countries have felt the importance of conservation of natural resources for a long time and have developed effective means to this end. In the well-known Black Forest region in Germany, one finds great forests of trees varying in size from a few feet to full-grown trees, set in rows, carefully trimmed and cared for by trained foresters. The law requires that for all trees cut down others shall be set out. Only recently have schools of forestry been established in this country in which men can be trained to care scientifically for our fast-disappearing forests. Discuss the loss of forests through unnecessary fire; the relation of forests to floods.

Much of our most fertile land has become less productive through our ignorance of scientific methods of farming. Our schools and colleges now give instruction in agriculture to counteract the waste which has been wrought. By soil analysis, rotation of crops, and other scientific methods, these lands will slowly be restored to a part, at least, of their former fertility.

The need of conservation is not confined to such material things as forests and lands. We have been equally wasteful of human life and comfort. Our railroads, factories, and mines are operated at the cost of thousands of lives each year, most of which might be saved. Laws are being passed requir-

ing railroads and manufacturers to provide increased protection against accident and making employers responsible for compensation for accidents to employees. Why have employers tried to prevent the passage of these laws? What relation to conservation have laws restricting the employment of children and shortening the working-day? Why was the law passed prohibiting the use of phosphorus in the manufacture of matches? Give some other illustrations. Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Apply this principle of Sabbath observance to conservation.

In our great cities there is much waste of human life through bad housing conditions and lack of proper sanitation. Discuss from the point of view of conservation the value of parks and playgrounds, bathing-beaches, the juvenile court, the inspection of milk and other foods. Great progress has been made in medicine in the prevention of disease. Is the Panama Canal more the result of our engineering skill than of our ability to prevent tropical diseases?

We hear much about the high cost of living in these days. What do you think of the statement that the problem is to meet the cost of high living rather than the high cost of living? Can you think of some things which you have and could hardly get on without which your father never had when he was a boy? Can you think of things which you have that you could get on as well or better without? One who lives in the country knows that good fruit rots on the ground each fall because the owner does not find it profitable to ship it to market. How do you reconcile this fact with the

high price of apples in the city market? Why need people anywhere be hungry when there is food enough for all?

In every form of industry, production has been greatly increased by the introduction of labor-saving machinery. Discuss the effect of the invention of the cotton gin. Compare the methods of planting, cultivating, and harvesting crops employed forty years ago with those employed now. What has been the effect of the telephone, the typewriter, the adding machine, and stenography upon business efficiency? Discuss in detail the effect of labor-saving machinery in some industry with which you are familiar.

The introduction of labor-saving machinery has made important changes in our social and industrial life. These changes have been in many respects beneficial; they have also introduced serious social problems. What beneficial results can you mention? What has become of the workmen whose places have been taken by machinery? What has been the effect upon the length of the working-day? What is the value of a shorter working-day to the workman? The shoemaker once performed all the labor involved in the making of a shoe, beginning with the tanned hide, and ending with the finished shoe. Now many workmen have a part in the process, each doing a small part over and over. The result is more and better shoes; but what is the effect upon the workman?

An important gain in efficiency in industry has been made by carefully

observing the movements of the workman as he performs his task and carefully eliminating unnecessary movements. Thus it has been found that by providing the material needed in the most convenient way, and by eliminating certain unnecessary movements, a bricklayer can accomplish several times as much work in a given time without additional fatigue. Do you know of any other similar gains that have been made in practical efficiency? Another very important element in successful business has been the utilization of by-products. It is said that in the great meat-packing houses of Chicago no part of the hog is lost but the squeal. Every part of the animal from the blood to the hoofs is used. Valuable by-products are secured in every line of industry; these are said in some cases to be more valuable than the original products. What do you know of the by-products of the steel business, the oil business, of the use of tailings in mines, of the use of cotton seed? Discuss in detail the use of by-products in any industry in your community. Compare the amount of money invested in churches and school buildings with the actual use made of the buildings. Discuss the larger use of these buildings for the social and political needs of the community.

Topics for further discussion: The work of the reclamation service of the government in the Everglades of Florida and the irrigation projects of the West; the preservation and use of the national forests; the coal fields of Alaska.

Study XVI. Conservation and Efficiency—Continued

In the last study we discussed conservation and efficiency in their larger aspects as applied to the nation and community and to various industries. In this study we shall make a personal application of the principles involved. It need not be said that an efficient nation or community must be composed of people who are individually efficient and thrifty. Nature has bestowed upon each of us certain resources, the conservation and efficient use of which are essential to our success as individuals. What are these?

We shall agree that our physical resources are of great value. We are not all equally endowed by nature in this respect. It is possible, however, to remedy in large measure what seem to be physical defects. Mr. Roosevelt in the second chapter of his autobiography has told us how from a sickly boy, with no natural bodily prowess, he made himself into the robust and vigorous man with whose physical efficiency the whole world is now familiar. On the other hand, it is possible for one not physically strong to live a long and efficient life by carefully conserving such strength as he has. A good illustration of this is seen in the case of Dr. Lyman Abbott whose interesting autobiography is now appearing in the *Outlook*. In boyhood are laid the foundations of physical efficiency. Careful conformity with the known laws of hygienic living, with proper physical training, will assure the full development of a boy's physical resources. The previous discussions regarding clean thinking and living and the use of stimulants and narcotics have

an important bearing on physical efficiency. Discuss the relation of the public parks, playgrounds, and bathing-beaches and -pools to the physical efficiency of the next generation. What bearing has the debated question of sex-hygiene instruction in the public schools to this topic?

Our minds are another of the resources which nature has given us. Which seems to you the more essential to efficiency, the body or the mind? Even more than our bodies, our minds must be properly trained in order to be effective. The schools afford an opportunity for all to train their minds. However, many boys of good natural abilities pass through school and even college whose minds at the end are not well trained and efficient. How do you account for this? It appears certain that it does not make so much difference what one studies, and, within certain limits, how long one studies; mental efficiency depends most upon the mental habits which one has acquired. One of the most important of these is concentration, the power to apply one's mind to a given task to the complete exclusion of everything else. This habit may be acquired. Is your mind inclined to wander from the problem in geometry which you are studying to the coming football game or party? If so, you must bring yourself back to your task by an act of the will. No habit so makes for mental inefficiency as that of divided attention. You will learn your lessons better in half the time and play football better if you hold yourself firmly to each in its proper time and

place. "Work while you work and play while you play" is a maxim of supreme importance. A little thought about your own experience will reveal some other important habits of mind. Which prepares you better for the semester examination, a reasonable amount of work each day, or cramming on the night before the examination? What other mental habits are important?

Does the possession of a strong and well-trained body assure efficiency? A well-trained mind? Is it possible to have both and yet be inefficient? A right attitude toward work must accompany these if efficiency is to be assured. Does the world owe anyone a living? If you had a million dollars and a good education what do you think you would do? Which seems to you likely to apply the severest test to character, wealth or poverty? What reasons have you for thinking that your life would not be happy if you should do no work?

The habit of saving is as essential to individual happiness as it is to business success. Which do you think will contribute more to a man's prosperity, the habit of saving or an increase in wages? The habit of saving may be acquired early. Do you keep a careful account

of all the money you receive and spend? Mr. Rockefeller did this when he was earning a few dollars a week as a clerk. Boys who receive weekly allowances often grow up without any idea of the value of money. This may prove a great misfortune later. How can a boy who has never earned any money have any sense of its value?

People sometimes seem to think that disregard for the value of money makes them socially conspicuous. These are likely to be of the class known as "newly rich." In what ways are the boys in your set wasteful? Are you just as careful not to waste or destroy the property of your school or of your employer as you would be if it were your own? Should a traveling man whose expenses are paid spend more money than if he were on his own expense? Jesus gave a good object-lesson in economy when after feeding the multitude he had the fragments of bread and fish gathered up in order that none should be lost (Luke 19:12-17).

Topics for further discussion: The relation of recreation to efficiency; forms of recreation best suited to boyhood and to mature manhood; the value of a college education from the point of view of efficiency.